



EVERY DAY IN EVERY WAY

USDA's Cultural Transformation Action Items

- LEADERSHIP
- RECRUITMENT & RETENTION
- TALENT MANAGEMENT
- EMPLOYEE DEVELOPMENT
- CUSTOMER FOCUS & COMMUNITY OUTREACH

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MyUSDA

A Progress Report for Employees on USDA's Cultural Transformation

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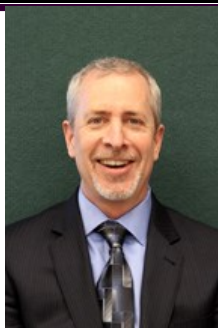
USDA Moves Up in Best Places to Work Ranking

By Dr. Karlease Kelly, Provost, USDA Virtual University

On December 8, 2015, the Partnership for Public Service released the 2015 Best Places to Work Rankings. The rankings are based on the results of the Federal Employee Viewpoint Survey. USDA moved up in the rankings to 11th out of 19 large agencies. Our 2014 ranking year was 13th.

Over the past two years, USDA has moved up a total of five places in the rankings due to the improvements we have made in communication, teamwork, diversity and inclusion, work life balance, employee training and development, and performance management. The Secretary has made it his goal to get USDA into the top ten next year, and it is important that every employee be engaged in helping us reach that goal. More details about the rankings can be found at: <http://bestplacetowork.org/BPTW/rankings/overall/large>.

If the way to a person's heart is truly through his/her stomach as the English proverb holds, then we touch every heart, every day, at every meal, through our work at USDA. That's why ensuring a safe, abundant, and nutritious food supply means our hearts stay healthy, sustained and full.



Brent Elrod
National Institute of Food and Agriculture

USDA is one of the best places to work because I have been able to grow my own destiny here - as an engineer, as a special emphasis program manager, and as a leader.



It doesn't matter who you are or whom you love, but what you make of yourself - because USDA is a place where you can grow your own destiny.

Meghan Walter
Natural Resources Conservation Service



USDA employees are incredibly committed to our mission and care deeply about the people we serve.

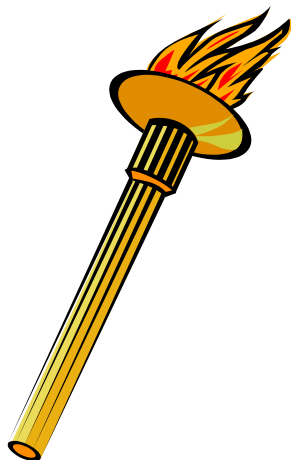
I am proud to be part of the USDA team!

Susan M. Siemietkowski
USDA - Food and Nutrition Service

Sign Up for the USDA 2016 Winter Olympics

By Debra Arnold, Office of Human Resources Management

USDA is committed to providing opportunities for employees to get fit and stay fit



leading to reduced absenteeism and increased productivity across the Department. The USDA Winter Olympics is the biggest wellness initiative of the year.

The Olympics provides employees the opportunity to participate in a fun, interactive event that will keep them moving during those sedentary winter months. Whether you are a novice or an expert at physical fitness, you can join the Olympics!

The 2016 Winter Olympics will run for eight weeks from January 10–March 5, 2016. Olympians will track their minutes of activity each week from Sunday to Saturday and submit weekly reports.

To provide all employees an opportunity to participate in this event, Olympians will be placed in one of three categories: Lion (expert); Fox (intermediate); or Turtle (novice). Where you are placed will be based on your weekly activity report. There will be a total of nine winners, including a Gold, Silver and Bronze Medal for each of the three categories.

Weekly updates will be provided to all the Olympians and highlighted in the Secretary's MyUSDA Newsletter. The Olympians with the most minutes at the end of the eight week competition will be declared the Olympic medalists in their respective categories. Winners will be announced on March 24, 2016, during an onsite and virtual awards ceremony, when they will receive their medals! Hosting this ceremony virtually will provide a venue to engage employees across the country and an opportunity for our medalists to personally receive recognition.

To register for the Olympics, send an email to wellness@dm.usda.gov by Friday, January 8, 2016, that includes your name, agency, state you are located and email address. Further details will be provided to the Olympians as they register.

A blog has been set up on the *Work/Life and Wellness* USDA Connect site entitled "Winter Olympics". We will post weekly reports, running totals and pictures of our medalists here for viewing. Olympians are encouraged to visit this blog frequently to share your exercise routines, encourage others and provide us with feedback on the Olympic experience.

Please consider joining and taking charge of your health!

FNS Employees Help Children Learn About Nutritious Food

By Susan M. Siemietkowski, Food and Nutrition Service

Last month, staff from the USDA Food and Nutrition Service Western Regional Office,



based in San Francisco, visited the Garden of Eatin' Farm to Preschool Program at the North Bay Children's Center in Novato, California. The visit was part of its "Out and About" initiative. Now in its fifth year of operation, the Garden of Eatin' operates nine North Bay Early Childhood Education centers that operate the Child and Adult Care Food Program. The program plays an important role in fostering a culture of health for children, families and center staff.

Out and About events support Cultural Transformation's "Customer Service and Community Outreach" pillar and allow employees to see the positive impact of their work firsthand.

USDA Recognized for Outstanding Human Capital Programs

By Dr. Karlease Kelly, Provost, USDA Virtual University

The Human Capital Management for Government Training event brings together stakeholders from

throughout the Federal and Defense Human Resources Community to discuss best practices for managing human capital, improving efficiency, and advancing innovation.

Each year, nominations are solicited for awards to recognize outstanding programs in human capital. A panel of peers reviews nominations and selects the winners. The USDA Office Human Resources Management (OHRM) submitted four nominations: USDA's Workforce Development Program Driving Employee Engagement for Category Two, Best Workforce Development Program; One USDA for Category Three, Best implementation of an Enterprise Technology System; and USDA's 360 Degree Assessment Programs and USDA Workforce Restructuring Team both for Category Five, Public Sector Innovation Award.

All four of OHRM's nominations were selected as finalists for the awards, and all of OHRM's nominations received an award. For Category Two, there were five finalists. USDA's Workforce Development Program Driving Employee Engagement placed third, with VA's Acquisition Academy placing 2nd and the U.S. Coast Guard Competency Management System placing 1st. For Category Three, there were four finalists. The One USDA nomination placed third, with the Department of Justice's Bookit One program placing 1st. For Category Five, there were four finalists. USDA's Workforce Restructuring Team and 360 Degree Assessment Program tied for third, with the Navy Civilian Careers Recruiting Partnership placing 2nd, and OPM's Innovation Connection placing 1st. This recognition is particularly meaningful because the selection is determined by subject matter experts in the Federal human capital field.

Leadership at the Core of Cultural Transformation

By Susan M. Siemietkowski, Food and Nutrition Service

Leadership, which includes treating others with respect and providing opportunities for staff to grow and develop, is a very important pillar of Cultural Transformation.

According to employees in the Mid Atlantic Regional Office (MARO) of USDA's Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) based in Robbinsville, New Jersey, Roberta Hodsdon (pictured right) is an example of a wonderful leader who exemplifies such attributes.

Roberta, who is the School Nutrition Programs Division Branch Chief in MARO, was recently recognized by her team as a supervisor who always goes the extra mile.

Hats off to Roberta and to many other dedicated supervisors at FNCS for being mentors, role models and advocates for their teams.



USDA Special Observances

You can read about and view recordings from many of USDA's Special Observances at <http://www.dm.usda.gov/employ/observances.htm>.

Observances are held at the Jefferson Auditorium in Washington, D.C. Employees receive one hour of diversity training for each USDA Special Observance attended.

USDA Celebrates Native American Heritage Month



On November 19, 2015, at the USDA American Indian and Alaska Native Heritage Month Observance, Leslie Wheelock (Oneida Nation of Wisconsin), Director of Tribal Relations moderated the panel discussion on “Growing Native Leaders-Enhancing Our Seven Generations.” Other participants included panelists: Fred P. Clark (Citizen Potawatomi Nation), Director, Forest Service Office of Tribal Relations; Lawrence A. Shorty (Navajo) Program Director, USDA 1994 Tribal Land-Grant Colleges and Universities Program; and “Butch” Blazer (Mescalero Apache), Deputy Under Secretary, Natural Resources and Environment.

USDA photo by Bob Nichols

The Seeds of Success: FSA Launches Harvest Recognition Program

By Thevee Gray, Farm Service Agency

The “Harvest Recognition” program sprang to life from seeds planted by the Workforce Engagement (WE) Team through collaborations between employees from each deputy area and leadership who were committed to introducing new WE initiatives.

The WE Team reviewed the Federal Employee Viewpoint Survey (FEVS) results and focus group reports and determined that FSA needed to focus on the key area of recognition. As a result, the Team came up with a unique idea to take the “recognition” tool a step further, and with support from senior leaders, the “Harvest Recognition” program was created.

This program is designed to recognize employees and leaders who have demonstrated exceptional commitment to workforce engagement, such as inspiring employees to successfully accomplish and support FSA’s mission, motivating and fostering employee’s well-being, or building good customer relationships.



The combination of passionate team members and the full support received from senior leaders, including Administrator Val Dolcini and WE champion Chris Beyerhelm, was key to our success.

Recipients of this award are presented with “Harvest Recognition” keepsakes (their choice of a commemorative coin or lapel pin).

The words “cultivating, sowing, tending and harvesting” are engraved on the keepsakes. Agriculture is the reason we exist as a department, and in keeping with the theme of what we do, leaders need to ensure the optimum environment for employees.

They need to tend to employees to ensure they succeed and together celebrate the rewards of collective hard work, making USDA THE BEST PLACE TO WORK! As our Administrator often says in his series of WE Chronicles, “when people of good will come together towards a common purpose, great things can happen!”

NRCS Hosts International Cultural Event

By Lisa Mason, USDA Cultural Transformation Task Force

Everyone was abuzz about this year's Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) cultural diversity event, saying it was the best one ever. As part of their Cultural Transformation efforts, NRCS hosted another International Cultural Bazaar that showcased a multitude of traditions based on various cultures.

The Whitten Patio was transformed into an outdoor marketplace. These stations were designed with cultural flare in an effort to create an engaging experience for everyone.

The theme for the event was "Cultural Bazaar: Celebration of Fusion in Diversity." This theme was extremely appropriate as it truly reflected the diversity and direction of NRCS. As one participant shared, "when you stand among each other, that is when you truly appreciate the differences that make NRCS an exciting place to work."

NRCS put a special emphasis on engaging employees by fostering an environment that encourages and promotes diversity within the workplace, and ensuring that participants were able to receive diversity and inclusion credit through AgLearn. Participants at the event, pictured below, enjoyed the international foods and attire!



Engaging Employees Through The Morning Java Challenge

By Bill Scaggs, Office of the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights

The Office of the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights (OASCR) is taking part in the *Civil Rights*

Morning Java Challenge, an online activity to engage employees. Each week, OASCR employees receive a civil rights-related question. The challenge is meant to broaden employee knowledge of civil rights history and the civil rights/agriculture interface. Recently, OASCR had a “live” challenge to kick off the new fiscal year. It was a training/team building event. Winners, pictured below, include the winner of the “live” challenge (James Daughtridge) and one of the winners from the “on-line” challenge, (Minh Pham). Others in the picture are members of the OASCR Training and Cultural Transformation Division.



Pictured (from L to R):

Gladys Gary Vaughn, PhD. (Chief, Training & Cultural Transformation Division), Sae Mi Kim (Training Coordinator, Training & Cultural Transformation Division), Minh Pham (Investigator, Program Complaints Division), James Daughtridge (EEO Specialist, Office of Adjudication), David King (Director, Office of Compliance, Policy, Training & Cultural Transformation Division).

NRCS Brings Community Garden to St. Paul

By Julie MacSwain, Natural Resources Conservation Service

Earlier this year, a ground breaking ceremony was held for the Kab Npauj Healing Garden at

the Lutheran Church of the Redeemer in St. Paul, Minnesota. Kab Npauj Healing Garden is an urban garden sustained through Hmoob indigenous spirituality, health, and healing. Hmoob is the language of the Hmong people of Asia. The project received funding from the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) for urban conservation outreach in St. Paul.

The garden project objective is to provide intergenerational farming for the local Hmong communities, where youth and elders can share farming practices. Located just two blocks south of Interstate 94, Kab Npauj Healing Garden is in a highly visible urban neighborhood. The planning, planting and harvesting of vegetables brought people together to support their local community.

The garden is a teacher of simple yet important truths, such as coming together to work side-by-side with others, and to learn about the soil and plants.

In a five-month period, produce was shared with elders and the youth of the community. “Renewing our bond with nature while surrounded by buildings and crowded thoroughfares demands ingenuity, creativity, and persistence,” said Cathee Pullman, Minnesota NRCS state conservationist. “Kab Npauj Healing Garden” is an excellent example of how a community garden can make a positive difference in the urban landscape.”

As for the future, plans are to move forward with planning another garden in the spring of 2016. For additional information regarding the Kab Npauj Healing Garden, please contact [Dorothy Her](#) or via mobile: 651-757-7391.

If you'd like to share your feedback about Cultural Transformation, telework, diversity, or any other aspect of work/life at USDA, send an email to: MyUSDA@dm.usda.gov or visit USDA's [Work/Life and Wellness](#) community website if you have access to [USDA Connections](#).



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MyUSDA Staff

Roberta Jeanquart—Editorial Director

Marsha Wiggins—Deputy Editorial Director

Perry Stevens—Editor-in-Chief

Alyn Kiel, Jennifer Yezak, Lynne Short, Karlease Kelly, Debra Arnold, Edwin Cierpial, Jr., James Brent, Melanie Clemons—Editors

Key Contributors:

Zina Sutch, Jacqueline Padron, Monshi Ramdass, Yetzenia Correa, Rod Mance, Ali Muhammad, Alison Levy, Michelle Jordan, Tina Hoellerer, Susan Siemietkowski, Max Finberg, Lisa Mason, Bill Scaggs, Julie MacSwain, Thevee Gray, Bob Nichols, Brent Elrod, Meghan Walter

If you have ideas for future articles, contact us at MyUSDA@dm.usda.gov

Submit Your Article to MyUSDA

The monthly deadline for submissions is the end of the first week of each month.

Guidance on Submissions to MyUSDA

Submissions to MyUSDA should indicate progress that you, your agency, or your mission area have achieved toward implementing the Secretary's Cultural Transformation (CT) Initiative. The ideal submission includes photos or graphics along with a brief description of the event. The ideal word count for articles is 150-200. All submissions are subject to editing and Departmental review.

Submissions may be in the form of a traditional article with a byline, a first-person account, or any work-related activity, event, or observance demonstrating the Secretary's Cultural Transformation Action Items: Leadership; Recruitment & Retention; Talent Management; Employee Development; and, Customer Focus & Community Outreach.

Email submissions or further inquiries to MyUSDA@dm.usda.gov.